

# Iowa Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman

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State Long-Term Care Ombudsman

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## Iowa Long-Term Care Ombudsman Reminds Iowans That Long-Term Care Residents Have Visitation and Access Rights

*October is National Resident's Rights Month*

(Des Moines, IA) Today, Long-Term Care Ombudsman Deanna Clingan-Fischer shared with Iowans that Resident Rights Month is a time to focus on specific issues relating to the rights of our citizens residing in long-term care settings. One of those issues is visitation and access rights.

The right to visit with people is among our most valued personal rights. Even the U.S. Constitution guarantees a right to visit by preventing the federal or state governments from curtailing our freedom to associate. At times visitors to long-term care facilities may feel they need to defer to the facilities rules regarding visitation, because they may believe long-term care facilities have the authority to make their own rules. However, visitation rules are only enforceable if they honor the basic rights of the residents.

"A person living in a long-term care setting maintains the same rights as an individual in the larger community. Visitation is one of those important rights and is crucial to those living in long-term care settings. Regular visits improve the quality of life for residents overall and can help them from feeling depressed and isolated. In addition, regular visitation may improve the quality of care a resident receives as visitors can observe the care given and serve as informal advocates for residents," Long-Term Care Ombudsman Clingan-Fischer stated.

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) have guidelines about residents' rights in long-term care facilities, including visitation and access. CMS explains that the resident has a right to visit and be visited by others in and outside the long-term care setting. This means that, in addition to receiving visitors at the facility, residents have the right to leave the facility temporarily to spend time with their visitors such as going out to lunch or dinner or some other event with their family and friends.

Long-Term Care Ombudsman Clingan-Fischer also pointed out that, along with the right to visitors, the resident has the right to refuse any visitor and the power-of-attorney for the resident cannot restrict who can or can't visit.

"Whether someone lives in a long-term care nursing facility, assisted living or elder group home they have the same rights as the rest of us to make decisions about whom we choose to visit with and for how long. Make a point to visit often with family and friends who live in long-term care settings. Your visits will add to their quality of life in more ways than you can imagine," Clingan-Fischer concluded.

To find out more about resident rights and how Iowans who reside in long-term care facilities can be helped to maintain their dignity and autonomy, contact the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman's Office at: [www.iowaaging.gov](http://www.iowaaging.gov) or call toll-free: 866/236-1430.

*\*This is the third in a series of four releases on National Resident Rights Month\**